



Sorting Nordic Identities 2: The Case of Three Ane Rasmussens

Forrest Emmett

Objectives:

This class will demonstrate how to separate combined identities in the FamilySearch Family Tree. The class will go over:

- Nordic naming, Family Tree merging, Family Tree sourcing practices
- Multiple identity problems
- The case of Ane Kirstine Rasmusdatter, ID: MN68-F7M

Nordic Naming Practices

A basic understanding of several Nordic naming practices can help researchers confidently identify their ancestors when there are multiple individuals with the same name.

- First, families often reused names. Children would be named after close relatives (grandparents, aunts, or uncles).
- Second, a popular name may be used for multiple babies in one year. Example: If Maria Johanna was the popular name that year, multiple families in the same community might use that name for their daughters.
- Third, recordkeepers regularly used abbreviations like Stina for Christina and Per for Peder. Example: Per Samuelsson and Peder Samuelsson could be the same person.
- Fourth, while it is true that Sweden typically ends a patronymic name with “son” and Denmark and Norway typically use “sen,” this does not apply after immigration to the US or in the family tree where people make mistakes.
- Sometimes, Nordic people would refer to an individual by their given name and where they were from. Example: Jens Spikset = Jens from Spikset. As researchers, it is a good idea to think of Nordic individuals not just by name, but also by where they are from.

While not unique to the Nordic countries, this last point is equally relevant.

- Standardized spelling for names is a relatively new phenomenon. Spelling will **never** be sufficient proof for sorting out identities.

FamilySearch Family Tree Merging Principles

FamilySearch utilizes a collaborative public tree that allows everyone to contribute and work together. This means that anyone can add, change, and remove people, relationships, and information. The ability to merge two people together was developed because users would inevitably create multiple duplicates of the same person.

Merging should only happen when the researcher is perfectly confident that there are two instances of the exact same person. There are several principles critical to merging:

- Conduct manual searches for duplicates based on relationships and places.
- When deciding whether to merge, make sure that names, dates, places, and relatives match.
- If something does not match, hold off on merging until you have a satisfactory explanation, preferably with proof.
- Always check all the attached sources and hints of both duplicates **before** merging.
- Leave an explanation for the merge.

FamilySearch Family Tree Sourcing Guidelines

Sources are the foundation of an accurate family tree; without sources nothing can be trusted. Nordic researchers are fortunate that the Nordic countries typically kept excellent records. Here are several guidelines for matching sources to Nordic individuals:

- Always check whether the source location matches where they were living at the time. The **biggest** mistake researchers make when attaching a source to a Nordic individual is not paying attention to the geography.
- Check to see if the source has already been attached to somebody.
- Try to attach the source to every individual mentioned in the record before moving on.

Multiple Identity Problems

What is a Multiple Identity Problem?

- When the profile for a single “person” in any family tree software has dates, places, relatives, or name fragments that belong to multiple distinct individuals.

How does a Multiple Identity Problem Happen?

- When a user incorrectly assumes that two people in the family tree with the same name are the same individual.
- When a user attaches a source or a relative incorrectly.

How to Avoid a Multiple Identity Problem

- Do not add someone to the Family Tree unless you intend to complete the research for that individual in a timely manner.
- Before merging a “person,” review the history; ask yourself “who created it?” “what unique information (dates, places, relatives) prompted its creation?”
- Before attaching a source to an individual, check to make sure that the dates, places, relatives, and names on the individual line up with that same information on the source. If there is any doubt, do not attach, do more research.

Lessons from the Case of Ane Kirstine Rasmussen

Anne Kirstine Rasmusdatter, PID MN68-F7M appeared in the FamilySearch tree with parents, a spouse, and five sources. Anne had never been merged. Nevertheless, important clues in the tree suggested that the parents, spouse, and sources belonged to three separate women named Ane Kirstine Rasmussen. Below are the essential steps for detecting, understanding, and fixing the problem.

Detect a Multiple Identity Problem

Inconsistencies in places, relatives, and dates are the telltale signs of multiple identities.

Multiple identity problems often involve merging.

- Check the sources for matching places and people.
 - Too many records from too many different localities should look suspicious.
 - Make sure the information about relatives matches what is in the tree.
- Be sure to check the source attachments.
 - While the exact process for checking source attachments may change over time, the idea will stay the same. Check who else the source is connected to in order to find evidence of multiple identities.
- Put it on a map! Use the FamilySearch Wiki for help with parish locations. Visualizing the geography helps researchers identify inconsistencies.
- Come up with explanations for the discrepancies and then evaluate if those explanations are plausible.

Case Study:

- Anne had records from multiple parishes and two different countries.
- Anne’s two census records had wildly different birth years for her parents.
- Anne’s sources were also attached to other people in the tree who seemingly had no connection to her.
- A map of Anne’s sources showed that even the Danish sources came from different areas in Denmark.

How to Make Sure You Understand the Problem

Evidence of multiple identities becomes clear as the information is put together and tracked.

- Compare the information in a table or timeline. Try looking at the information in different ways, by record, by location, or by dates.
- Look at the change history; specifically look for when an incorrect addition or merge was made. Find out which identity was the original.

Case Study:

- It became obvious that Anne could not have both married in Norway and been present as a young child in Denmark 20 years later.

Records	Marriage Record	1870 Census	Birth, Confirmation, Census
Parents	Rasmus Pettersen Anne Kirstine Halvorsdr	Rasmus Pedersen Anne Kirstine Sorensen	Rasmus Pedersen Ane Kirstine Andersdr
Spouse	Carl Helberg		
Birth	1818 Norway	1858 Randers	31 March 1857 Vejle
Residence		1870 Randers	1870 Vejle
Confirmation			9 April 1871 Vejle
Marriage	17 November 1852 Norway		

- The “change history” showed that Anne was created as the woman who married in Norway, the Denmark sources were added later incorrectly.

How to Separate Out Multiple Identities in the Tree

- Fill in the blanks to prove the need for separation and prevent mistakes from happening again.
- Start separating the other identities. Begin by looking for relatives that may be somewhere else in the tree (check the source attachments). It is easier to separate the identities if family of each identity already exists in the tree.

Case Study:

- All relevant pieces of information were found except for the marriage/death of Ane from Vejle.
- The table below proved beyond a doubt that they were three separate people.

Events	Anne from Norway	Ane from Randers	Ane from Vejle
Parents	Rasmus Petersen Anne Kirstine Halvorsdr	Rasmus Pedersen Ane Kirstine Sorensen	Rasmus Pedersen Ane Kirstine Andersdr
Spouse	Halvor Johnsen Carl Helberg	Marius Nielsen	Unknown/May not have married
Birth	4 July 1818 Norway	21 June 1857 Randers	31 March 1857 Vejle
Residence	1875 Norway	1870 Randers	1870 Vejle
Confirmation	2 November 1834 Norway	16 April 1871 Randers	9 April 1871 Vejle
Marriage	6 October 1841 Norway 17 November 1852 Norway	5 November 1880 Randers	Emigrated in 1885; maybe died

- Added sources and updated information for Norwegian Anne (since she was the main identity); Searched for unattached relatives in the tree and they were all there.
- There was already a duplicate of Ane from Randers Added correct sources and detached incorrect sources from Norwegian Anne.
- Her sisters were already in the tree. Created Ane from Vejle and her parents and combined the family together. Added correct sources and detached incorrect sources from Norwegian Anne.

Conclusion

- Do not merge people unless you are certain they belong to the same locations, dates, and relatives.
- Make sure the sources and relatives you add are correct by analyzing places, dates, and relatives.
- Fixing a multiple identity problem requires time and attention to detail. Always check the sources and attachments. Compare the record information/put it on a map. Fix it by separating identities and attaching sources so that it never happens again.
- Most of the time it is unnecessary to undo merges or revert information.
- Consider messaging the people involved in contributing up to that point.
- Add the people to your watch list for the future.